

Mussel inspections underway at Boyd, on tap for Carter, Horsetooth

Larimer County to open boat ramps April 1

By Pamela Johnson

Reporter-Herald Staff Writer
Loveland Reporter-Herald

Posted: Wed Mar 14 20:38:37 MDT 2018

Boats that launch on Colorado waters this summer will, for the 10th year running, be required to pass an inspection first to keep local lakes free from invasive mussels.

With legislation to pay for the statewide inspections pending and expected to pass for next summer, Colorado Parks and Wildlife has pieced together the \$4.5 million to pay for the statewide program this year, including \$1 million from partner agencies.

How much of that will come from Larimer County is still up in the air with just over two weeks until Carter Lake and Horsetooth Reservoir open their first boat ramps of the season.

"We're definitely going to have inspections again this year," confirmed Gary Buffington, director of the Larimer County Department of Natural Resources. "We're gearing up ..."

Colorado passed its Aquatic Nuisance Species Act in 2008, requiring boat inspections starting in 2009 at many lakes and reservoirs across the state to keep the waters free from invasive zebra and quagga mussels that have devastated waters and infrastructure in states where they have taken hold.

For the first eight years, Colorado Parks and Wildlife covered the \$4 million cost of the program through oil and gas severance taxes. Last summer, however, that funding source could not cover the entire program due to changes in tax collection from a Colorado Supreme Court Decision.

o, different agencies with a stake in the reservoirs pitched in money alongside the state parks to cover the cost of inspections.

At Carter and Horsetooth in 2017, the \$300,000 program cost was split three ways by Colorado Parks and Wildlife, Larimer County and Northern Water, which manages the water stored in the reservoirs.

The agencies are still discussing how the funding will play out this year at Carter and Horsetooth, with key officials meeting next week. Buffington said they are looking at some sort of split similar to last year with a fourth partner, the Bureau of Reclamation, which owns the reservoirs, possibly contributing equipment.

"We haven't finalized things yet," added Buffington.

Though Northern Water officials are at the table, a specific request has not been made to the water district's board yet this year. The district, however, does support protecting the water, spokesman Brian Werner said.

"We want to keep the boogers out of our reservoirs," Werner said. "I think everybody does."

Larimer County plans to open some boat ramps at Carter Lake and Horsetooth Reservoir on April 1 with access to at least one ramp seven days a week 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. throughout the month. Inspectors will be on site at those boat ramps throughout those days and hours.

Boat ramps already opened and inspections are underway at Boyd Lake State Park, which was busy with the sunny weather Wednesday afternoon. State parks opened to boating March 9, and that first day, a boat encrusted with mussels was intercepted at Highline State Park outside of Grand Junction.

No mussels have been spotted at Boyd Lake this year, though park ranger Charlee Olson said they find a couple each summer. Olson, who manages the inspection program at Boyd, and inspector Thomas Hamrick decontaminated two boats Wednesday by flushing them with hot enough water to kill any mussels that may be inside and not visible to the eye.

One boat was decontaminated because of lingering water and the second because it had last been on waters out of state, even though it had a seal of inspection from that other state.

"We just want to be cautious when it's a little higher risk," said Olson.

Inspections have saved Colorado waters from these mussels that, once they are present, quickly multiply and cause ecological and infrastructure problems, according to Colorado Parks and Wildlife. In other states where mussels have taken hold, reports indicate billions of dollars in damage to intake pipes, water filtration equipment, power plants as well as to the recreation industry.

Last year alone, inspections found 25 boats infected with adult invasive mussels in Colorado. Pictures of the first boat this year depict an extreme example with sections of the boat not even visible underneath a thick coating of mussels.

Lauren Truitt, spokeswoman for Colorado Parks and Wildlife, pointed to those pictures and added, "It's very evident why this is a destructive species to any ecosystem."

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Youth Gardeners, others get grants

GRANTS

Department of Natural Resources awards \$20,646 to community projects

from page 3A

LARIMER COUNTY

BY PAMELA JOHNSON

REPORTER-HERALD STAFFWRITER

Larimer County recently awarded 11 small grants totaling \$20,646 to neighborhood and community projects designed to connect people to the outdoors and to promote education and sustainability.

Since 2008, the Department of Natural Resources has awarded a total of \$287,800 to 192 different community and neighborhood projects throughout the county through its Small Grants for Community Partnering program.

This year's winners include a Loveland gardening program, a project to plant a medicine wheel garden at High Plains Environmental Center, the reduction of invasive plants in a Loveland neighborhood, a raptor center's educational programs and a research project at Red Mountain Open Space.

The three largest grants were for \$3,000 each, one to the Denver Museum of Nature and Science to study mass extinction and conduct geologic fieldwork and lab analysis of the Lykins Formation at Red Mountain Open Space, one to Loveland Youth Gardeners and one to the Rocky Mountain Raptor Center.

The grant for the Youth Gardeners, a nonprofit that helps mentor and teach youth life lessons and skills through gardening, will allow for expansion of its community gardens and construction of a greenhouse, according to information from Larimer County. The project will enable the nonprofit to grow more food, reach more people and become more financially sustainable, according to information on the awards.

The Rocky Mountain Raptor Center will use its grant to provide interpretive education presentations to schools and community groups throughout Northern Colorado.

Other Loveland projects that received grants, according to Larimer County, include:

- \$1,014.50 to Volunteers for Outdoor Colorado to install a medicine wheel garden with native plants at

SEE GRANTS, 10A



Talia Becker, a member of the Loveland Youth Gardeners Leaf Out program, smells a piece of oregano on Aug. 28, 2017, as she harvests the herb from their garden in Loveland. The nonprofit garden program

recently received a \$3,000 grant from Larimer County to expand its gardens and build a green house.

JENNY SPARKS / Loveland Reporter-Herald File Photo

Youth Gardeners, others get grants

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High Plains Environmental Center, 2698 Bluestem Willow Drive

- \$500 for the Kendall Brook Master Association to reduce invasive populations of Russian olive, Canada thistle and hairy willow herb and restore biological diversity of the homeowners association wetlands.

Two separate grants were awarded to the Estes Land Stewardship Association—\$ 2,998.50 for a public event for residents to properly dispose of noxious weeds and invasive plants within the Estes Valley area and \$755 for a publication to be given free to inform residents about noxious weeds, according to information from Larimer County.

Other grants include: \$1,143.90 to the Mulberry Community Gardens to improve a hoop house and \$1,100 to Ridgewood Hills Homeowners Association to add raptor perches and American kestrel boxes to its wetlands, both in Fort Collins; \$2,000 to Wellington Middle School to add a composting unit to the sustainability curriculum; and \$2,144 to the Soaring Eagle Ecology Center at Red Feather Lakes to enhance technology for its presentations.

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Northern Colorado genetically pure bison herd has quadrupled in size

Jacy Marmaduke, jmarmaduke@coloradoan.com Published 2:23 p.m. MT March 26, 2018 | Updated 2:42 p.m. MT March 26, 2018



(Photo: Austin Humphreys/The Coloradoan)

A bison calf known as IVF 1 represents a research milestone for Northern Colorado's [genetically pure bison herd](#) ([/story/news/2015/11/01/rare-bison-free-roam/75023232/?hootPostID=a74fd0ba9d78493ea5342d70328a4458](#)).

The Laramie Foothills Bison Conservation Herd now has 44 members after the mid-March addition of four calves and their mothers, according to a [Colorado State University press release](#) (<https://cvmbc.source.colostate.edu/its-a-girl-first-ivf-bison-calf-joins-noco-herd/>).

The herd has more-than-quadrupled in size since the initial bison release at Soapstone Prairie Natural Area and Red Mountain Open Space in November 2015. The animals are related to the Yellowstone National Park

bison herd, preserving rare American bison genetics.

More: [Get up close and personal with a rare herd of genetically pure bison](#) ([/story/news/2017/07/07/get-up-close-and-personal-rare-herd-genetically-pure-bison/452596001/](#))

One of the March newcomers is 10-month-old IVF 1, so-named because she's the first bison calf conceived through in-vitro fertilization (IVF) at Colorado State University. CSU manages the herd along with the city of Fort Collins and Larimer County.

In-vitro fertilization means the egg is fertilized outside of the bison. Researchers used eggs taken from bison from Yellowstone National Park and fertilized them with sperm from bulls with Yellowstone genetics in the lab, according to the CSU release.

The team, led by CSU reproductive physiologist Jennifer Barfield, had previously focused on in-vivo fertilization, a process in which the egg is fertilized inside a bison and then moved to another animal.

The story continues below the photo gallery.

offers some advantages for conservation. Frozen embryos can remain viable for decades or more, decreasing the risk of extinction if Yellowstone National Park's bison herd begins to shrink.

The success rate of IVF in bison is unknown, but the process is similar to IVF for humans. Human IVF birth success rate for women under 35, according to the press release.

IVF 1 is also the first bison calf in the world to be conceived using reproductive material from animals removed from Yellowstone National Park, according to CSU.

Barfield said IVF 1's birth was a surprise.

"I didn't have a lot of hopes for this particular embryo, because she didn't look that great," she said in the release. "But she defied the odds and survive

The team will transfer more IVF embryos later this year, Barfield said. Project leaders hope the herd will one day have 100 members.

How to see the bison

Where: Soapstone Prairie Natural Area, 25 miles north of Fort Collins

How to get there: From Fort Collins, take U.S. Highway 1 (Terry Lake Road) to County Road 15 North. Then turn north on Rawhide Flats Road and continue on that road until you reach the entrance station. You can sometimes view the bison from Rawhide Flats Road.

From Interstate 25, take Exit 288 to Buckeye Road and head west to County Road 15 north. Then follow the directions above.

When: Dawn to dusk, March 1 through Nov. 30

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Pinewood Reservoir may close to motorboats because of mussel inspections

Larimer County officials say the reservoir isn't busy enough for a full-time inspector

By Pamela Johnson

Reporter-Herald Staff Writer
Loveland Reporter-Herald

Posted: Thu Apr 12 07:37:22 MDT 2018

Motorized boats likely will no longer be allowed on Pinewood Reservoir this season because of required aquatic nuisance species inspections, though kayaks, float tubes and canoes will still be welcome on the waters.

The Larimer County Department of Natural Resources expects to change its rules regarding small motorized boats launched from a trailer on Pinewood Reservoir, west of Loveland, after receiving a letter from the Bureau of Reclamation this week requiring live inspections before launching.

"It's all but inevitable," said Ken Brink Jr., visitor services manager for the Larimer County Department of Natural Resources.

The requirement of live inspections — or locked gates — is to protect the water from invasive mussels that destroy the ecosystem and can cause billions of dollars in damage to infrastructure as has been seen in other states.

Colorado has required inspections at most of its waters since 2009, and the Bureau of Reclamation eastern district is stepping that up this year after larvae of these pests were found in Green Mountain Reservoir on the Western Slope.

"We're trying to protect recreation by doing this," said Signe Snortland, area manager for the bureau's Eastern Colorado office. "We're trying to protect fisheries and our infrastructure so we can deliver water and produce power."

"Yes, this is an inconvenience, but if we don't keep these mussels out of our reservoirs, we're going to have such increased costs," she added. "It's going to affect everyone, and (mussels) can cause a complete collapse of the ecosystem."

Larimer County has had inspectors at boat ramps at Carter Lake and Horsetooth Reservoir since the state first launched its Aquatic Nuisance Species Act in 2009. Those are the two largest county-operated lakes that see the most boat traffic each season.

Nearby Pinewood Reservoir, which is quieter and does not experience the same boating volume, has never had inspectors on its single launch ramp.

Last year, the county implemented a system where boaters were required to be inspected at Carter before launching at Pinewood. Boaters would simply cut off the inspection seal and put it in a locked box at Pinewood, which was checked several times each day by rangers. This system worked well with strong compliance, according to Brink.

That compromise, Brink said, is no longer acceptable to the Bureau of Reclamation, which manages the reservoirs for the Colorado-Big Thompson project and is essentially the landlord for Larimer County, which manages recreation at those reservoirs — Horsetooth, Carter, Pinewood and Flatiron.

The letter that Larimer County received Monday requires an inspector or that the recreation agency lock the gate at the end of the ramp.

The estimated cost of hiring a full-time inspector — about \$70,000 per season for Pinewood's one ramp — cannot be justified for the small amount of boat traffic at Pinewood, Brink explained. Last year, rangers collected about 60 inspection seals at the reservoir, which on average tallies no more than 100 motorized boats during its busiest seasons. Pinewood is more popular for kayaks, float tubes and row boats.

The increased vigilance required by the Bureau of Reclamation is, in part, due to veligers, or larvae of these destructive mussels found in Green Mountain Reservoir, according to Snortland.

If these larvae mature into adult mussels, they will quickly multiply and take over as has been seen in other states, which have tallied billions of dollars in damage. In addition to clinging to intake pipes, dams and boats, which can transport the pesky mussels between waters, these species also choke out the ecosystem and destroy habitat for fish and other healthy species.

"A single female mussel can produce up to 1 million eggs per year," said Snortland. "That's beyond rabbits."

The inspection system, which is also in place at Boyd Lake State Park in Loveland, was designed to prevent the spread of mussels via boats, and since the program started more than 60,000 decontaminations have occurred. Last year alone, inspections prevented 25 infected boats from hitting Colorado waters and, last month, on the first day of boating season, inspectors found a boat coated in mussels headed for Highline State Park near Grand Junction.

Because of the risk and the larvae, the eastern office of the Bureau of Reclamation sent letters to the recreation partners at each of its reservoir systems — the Colorado-Big Thompson and the Fryingpan-Arkansas projects — requiring inspectors for all motorized boats or locked gates on the boat ramps. Larimer County is expecting to lock the gate at Pinewood in the near future.

Normally, Larimer County goes through a scoping process with public input before making such a change. Brink and Snortland said they are working together with a meeting planned next week to figure out the next step and to plan how to spread the word to the public about the need for the change.

"We all want to protect the water quality of the system," said Brink. "It's essential to the community."

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Authorities seek info on Horsetooth Reservoir arsons

By Hans Peter

Reporter-Herald Staff Writer
Loveland Reporter-Herald

Posted: Thu Apr 12 14:55:13 MDT 2018

The Larimer County Department of Natural Resources announced Thursday that they are on the hunt for those responsible for two arsons at Horsetooth Reservoir facilities.

A release from the department's spokesman, Teddy Parker-Renga states that two restroom trash cans have been burned at the day use areas on the east side of the reservoir, causing around \$1,000 in total damages to the facilities.

The trash cans, made of plastic, were destroyed by the fires, and paint inside restroom facilities also melted from flames.

"Your tax dollars are going toward cleaning up the damage," stated a Facebook post on behalf of the Natural Resources Department.

The first of the two arson incidents occurred in early March at the Sunrise day use area. Days later, on March 17, another trash can was set ablaze at around 10:20 at the Skyline day use area.

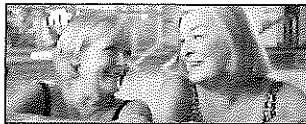
Parker-Renga stated that authorities believe the two arsons are connected.

Anyone with tips or information on the fires is encouraged to call Larimer County rangers at 970-498-5602.

Hans Peter: 970-635-3630, hpeter@reporter-herald.com

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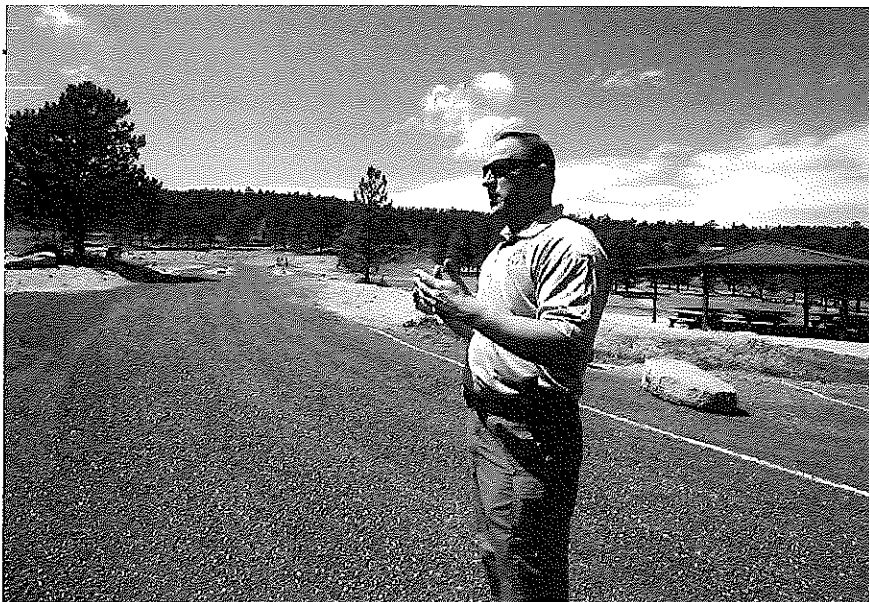
Carter Lake's South Shore reopens with 21 new campsites

\$1.3 million upgrade, expansion is complete

By Pamela Johnson

Reporter-Herald Staff Writer

POSTED: 04/12/2018 07:35:53 PM MDT



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Larimer County District Manager Dan Rieves talks Thursday about some of the additions and changes to the South Shore Campground at Carter Lake after some renovations there. (Jenny Sparks / Loveland Reporter-Herald)

After \$1.3 million in upgrades, Carter Lake's South Shore campground will reopen Sunday with a brand new loop of 21 campsites, more parking, new bathrooms, an expanded boat ramp and a refigured entrance.

"It's exciting," said Dan Rieves, the Carter Lake district manager for the Larimer County Department of Natural Resources. "We have 21 more families every weekend that aren't getting turned away."

The new campsites are the first added to Carter Lake as well as nearby Pinewood and Flatiron reservoirs for more than 20 years, and the existing sites — 180 between all three locations — quickly fill up every weekend throughout the summer. In fact, all the previous campsites are full for this weekend, so the first campers in the new area were booked as overflow sites.

South Shore closed when the camping season wrapped up in September with construction occurring throughout the fall and winter in the campground near the water's southern edge.

Though contractor Connell Resources was hired for the construction piece, the design and engineering as well as parts of the work were done in-house across Larimer County departments. Rieves said he is proud of the collaboration and diverse skills that made the project possible.

The Larimer County trail crew scavenged native rocks and carefully placed them to build walkways to the picnic tables at the new campsites.



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Norm Bemler, left, and Eric Young, in the front end loader, both with Larimer County Natural Resources Carter Lake Maintenance, work Thursday to move parking bumpers back into place after a renovation of the South Shore Campground at Carter Lake west of Loveland. (Jenny Sparks / Loveland Reporter-Herald)

Carter Lake maintenance crews dug by hand the holes in which to place the new fire grates, poured the cement footings and secured the fire pits into place. Plus, they also started a fire in each and every grate to season the metal and cement so it is ready for campers.

Casey Cisneros, the county's weed district manager, handled the planting of native grasses with a special mulch layer to boost regrowth. Green sprouts already are peeking through.

The overall project, in addition to adding new campsites, created a larger parking area and included improvements throughout the existing and very popular campground. One much-needed upgrade was to the bathrooms that were built in the 1960s. The

county replaced the two original bathrooms with new vaulted restrooms and installed a third in the new camping loop.

The trash bins have been centrally located instead of placed in several spots throughout the site, making them more efficient to empty, the driveway into the site was relocated, and crews moved the parking lot 50 yards closer to the road by excavating a small hillside, officials said. The new lot has 24 additional boat parking spaces.

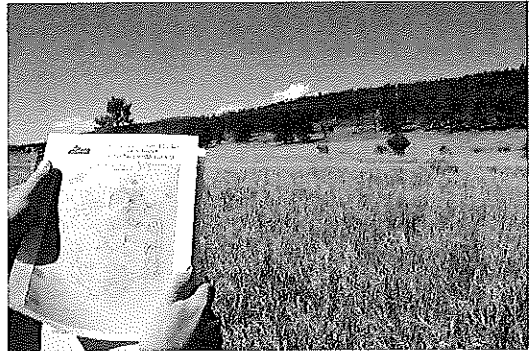
A third lane on the boat ramp, that previously was shorter than the other two, was extended to full length. This will allow access from all three lanes even when the water is lower, translating into less wait for boaters to launch.

The boat ramp, though completed, will not open this Sunday alongside the new campground. The county said it will open in May as boat access increases across Carter Lake and Horsetooth Reservoir.

The overall cost of the project was about \$1.3 million. The Bureau of Reclamation, which owns the reservoir while the county manages recreation around it, contributed some to the cost of the project, though the majority came from lottery money as well as revenue from parks fees.

"People pay their fees," explained Ken Brink Jr., visitor services manager for the Department of Natural Resources, "and we reinvest it and give them improvements."

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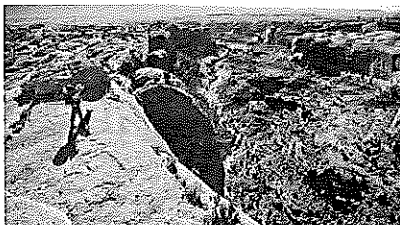
This meadow, pictured last May, has been transformed into a loop of 21 new campsites at the South Shore campground at Carter Lake. After a \$1.3 million face-lift, the campground reopens this Sunday. (Pamela Johnson / Loveland Reporter-Herald)



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A new loop of campsites seen Thursday are part of a renovation of the South Shore Campground at Carter Lake west of Loveland. (Jenny Sparks / Loveland Reporter-Herald)

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